

**Statement by  
Edward J. Markey (D-MA)  
November 18, 1999**

Mr. Speaker,

November is Alzheimer's Awareness Month – This month we recognize the 4 million Americans victimized by this devastating disease and the family members who are most often their primary caregivers.

Alzheimer's Disease is debilitating, indiscriminate and cruel -- it creeps into the brain, captures the mind and renders its victims with impaired judgement, personality change and loss of language and communication skills.

Today, Alzheimer's is on track to wreak havoc on our nation's health care system and leave millions of American families in emotional and financial ruin. It is predicted that by 2050, 14 million Americans will be afflicted. Now is the time to work on a strategy to combat this impending epidemic.

As part of this strategy, we must recognize that there are thousands of spouses and other family members struggling to provide care for their loved ones in their homes each year.

Seven in 10 people with Alzheimer's disease live at home. While almost 75% of home care is provided by family and friends, the average annual cost of paid care for people with Alzheimer's disease at home is \$12,500.

The total annual cost of Alzheimer care in the United States today is at least \$100 billion and the disease costs American business \$33 billion annually, most of that in the lost work of employees who are caregivers.

In addition to creating new programs to relieve caregivers of their burden, we need to continue our work toward treatment and a cure. Last year the federal government dedicated \$400 million to Alzheimer's research but that's still not enough -- the federal commitment to heart, cancer and AIDS research – diseases of comparable cost to our country – is 3 to 5 times higher. This year I would like to see research dollars for Alzheimer's increased by \$100 million dollars.

Last June – in an effort to inspire legislative solutions to deal with Alzheimer's – I along with my colleague from across the aisle Chris Smith – kicked off the first bipartisan Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease. To date we have 82 members with a goal of reaching 100 by 2000.

It's time to come together to wage a war against Alzheimer's disease. The time has come to fight to improve the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's today and for finding a cure to save the lives of those who will be affected tomorrow.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker and yield back the balance of my time.